

Halo: Trial by Fire

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Summary: AU The Covenant attacked and the UNSC responded. But what if things were different, they were stronger than they thought they were. The fight wasn't going to be as one sided as the Covenant believed. Is Humanity truly ready to face the horrors of space or will they fall? Will they survive the Trial by Fire? Quite a bit of OCs, Pairings undecided, New Ideas, Read and Review.

1. Harvest

****Hello readers. I have had the biggest wall in regarding my Naruto fanfic so I decided to allow one of my plot bunnies to come into fruition. Please note that these are unbetaed unless someone wishes to do so. This story is an AU which will consist of similarities and differences with the canon. Please enjoy.****

****Disclaimer: I do not own the Halo Franchise, however the OCs are of my creation.****

****Halo: Trial By Fire****

Humanity.

Once thought to be primal several centuries ago and yet here they were, reaching for the stars with no bounds as they race through the never-ending darkness called space, the so called final frontier. Vice Admiral Preston Cole, the CO of the UNSC Harvest Fleet, could only look outside the bridge window at the world down below. He watched as the large blocks of steel floated away from the blue and green planet he had called his home.

Home. That was something he missed greatly and it was so close to his grasp yet so far. He always dreamed of the days when he could return home. Return to Earth, the planet that orbited within his gaze. He dreamed of what would have been happening if he was at home, watching the snow flutter down to the ground while the bright stars

illuminated the skies above. Friends and family would come from near and far to his English home for the Christmas dinner that his family normally had.

Yet this was not meant to be this December of 2525. A few months ago, a coalition of aliens called the Covenant attacked the agriculture colony of Harvest. He had been requested by ONI, also known as the Office of Naval Intelligence, to return to service with hopes of defeating this threat. That was only two months ago. Now, he watched as a fleet of massive proportions gathered. He was told that there was only a single Covenant ship above Harvest, yet a fleet of over 50 ships gathered. He wasn't able to recognize several of them but quickly noted them off.

He stood within his Valiant-class Super-Heavy Cruiser, the UNSC Everest, watching as ships larger than his floated into position with names painted along their sides with the UNSC logo.

"Admiral Cole, we have a message for you sir," stated an officer. "It's labeled for your eyes only."

With a sigh, the weary man walked into his personal quarters and pulled up the message.

TO: V-ADM PRESTON COLE

ADMIRAL, WE HAVE GIVEN YOU CONTROL OVER SOME OF THE STRONGEST VESSELS THAT THE UNSC HAVE TO OFFER. SOME OF THESE VESSELS HAVE NEVER BEEN SEEN BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND HOLD MORE FIREPOWER THAN YOU HAVE EVER WITNESSED. THIS WILL BE THE TEST IF HUMANITY IS TRULY READY FOR THE STARS.

YOUR CURRENT ORDERS:

DESTROY THE COVENANT VESSEL ABOVE HARVEST AND REGAIN CONTROL OVER THE PLANET.

DEFEND HARVEST FROM FUTURE AGGRESSORS

FROM: OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE

'Is mankind truly ready to face this kind of opponent, one who is able to destroy a single planet with a single ship?' wondered Cole as he looked over the message again. 'I hope for our sake that these vessels are as powerful as they deem them to be or humanity may be doomed.'

Nothing could have prepared him for what was going to happen but somehow, he knew was going to be called back into war. Just not a kind of war he had expected. With another sigh, he walked his way to the bridge of his vessel where his crew looked at him with expectations and nervousness.

"Open a channel to all vessels," he ordered to the communications officer, who nodded back to him before doing so.

"Channels open sir."

"This is Vice Admiral Preston Cole to all vessels in this fleet," he started. "Several months ago, a new threat of unimaginable parallel

has appeared from the horizon and threatens humanity in ways we have never seen before. We will not be fighting to stop tyranny nor oppression or persecution but rather from annihilation. We were here today as humanity's answer to this threat. We will not simply go quietly into the night! We will not vanish without a fight! We will fight and we will survive!"

A roar echoed throughout the vessel and amongst the other vessels as they readied themselves.

"All ships, prepare for slipspace jump!"

"All ships ready for jump sir," answered one of the officers.

"Punch it."

The Harvest Fleet, dubbed Battle Group X-Ray, disappeared into the massive wormhole, with hopes high on stopping this threat.

Within the bowels of the ship, several members of the Everest walked around and none more than one specific soldier, or rather pilot. Walking around the hanger with a clear sign of nervousness, she walked around her fighter, a basic GA-TL1 Longsword-class Interceptor. With a sigh, she ran her hand through her long black hair with a small frown evident on her heart shaped face. She watched closely as the engineers prepped her fighter with bullets and missiles, unaware that someone was behind her.

"Hello Captain," said a voice, completely startling her. "May I join you?"

The female Captain turned around to find the aged Vice Admiral looking at her with a calculating gaze. She was immediately relieved at his sight but yet the nerves just seemed to grow.

"O-Of course sir," she stuttered out her reply.

"You may speak freely, Captain," said Cole as he moved forward and placed a hand on the dark colored fighter. "And this is completely off record."

"Y-Yes sir," replied the female Captain. "I'm just nervous. That's all..."

"Is this your first real engagement, Captain?"

"No sir, I have participated in several battles before. My squadron has participated in several during the time of the Insurrection."

"Ah... If I must be right, you must be the famed Swordsman squadron? I heard a lot of your squad during the times when I was in the Gorgon. One of the few squadrons that remained undefeated and took no losses."

"We're not famous sir, we we're just doing our jobs."

"We all were," responded the aged man as he released a chuckle. "So what is your squadron doing here? Are you here to make a mark or are you here because of orders?"

"Sir, we're here because we volunteered to be here. ONI gave us a choice and we all chose to be here. I'm pretty sure that several of the other squadrons here for the same reason. Humanity was threatened and it is our job to protect them."

"Humanity, such a broad word..."

"It's a broad that defines who we are, even though everyone has their differences, we still find a way to unite when humanity is threatened."

"Admiral! We're about to pull out of slipspace!" called a voice from his communicator.

"Well, looks like the day we've been waiting for has arrived," said the admiral as he looked into the brown eyes of the female Captain. "Get your pilots ready, I have a feeling that this will not go the way we expect it to."

"Yes sir!" she replied as she grabbed her helmet before turning to face the admiral, who was walking away. "And sir, since when do things ever go the way that we think it will?"

Cole just looked back with a small smile as he heard her statement and just released a small chuckle as he continued his way to the bridge.

The nerves had become worse as the days of being in slipspace began to take their toll on the sailors, pilots, and soldiers within the Battle Group. There was nothing in basics that could have prepared the normal soldier for what they were about to face and everyone knew it. But as the group drew closer to Harvest, nervousness tied in with anticipation and it wasn't long before the vessels exited slipspace.

"Report."

"All ships are accounted for Admiral. There are no signs of the Covenant vessel though," reported his officer upon the _Everest_.

"Keep your eyes wide open, they can be anywhere," ordered the experienced veteran.

It wouldn't be long as the Battle Group spotted the purple colored vessel, or rather vessels, that clearly identified them as part of the Covenant. The sleek ships looked nothing like that of the UNSC's as they hovered in the dark reaches of space.

"Admiral, we have visual of the Covenant. There appears to be more than one vessel!" reported one of the bridge officers. "We were told that there was only one vessel here!"

"Son, nothing ever goes the way that we wish but we have to be able to adapt! We are part of UNSC!" he stated as he turned to look at the officers in the bridge before turning his gaze to the sleek purple vessels that orbited Harvest. "Tell me what we're facing soldier. And patch me to all vessels."

"We have that one Covenant vessel, dubbed Battleship class. We have four unknown Covenant vessels that are quite smaller than it, almost Destroyer class," he reported. "And you are on sir."

"All vessels, this is Vice Admiral Cole, it is time. They have struck us when we were unprepared and now it is our turn to show them who they have messed with. All vessels, warm up all guns and prepare Longsword launch! Flank speed!"

Battle Group X-Ray flew towards the handful Covenant vessels at the full speed with no sign of stopping. The purple vessels of their intended targets slowly turned, showing their sides to the oncoming group before releasing a large swarm of small dark purple vessels.

"Sir, they have launched their fighters!" reported an officer.

"Launch all Longsword squadrons!"

As soon as the order was given, the UNSC Battle Group launched their own fighters, the large, bulky and gray Longswords. They flew towards the incoming fighters of the Covenant at full speed.

"Sir, all fighters have been launched!"

"Good! Fires of Freedom, Austerlitz, Constantiople, and Maelstrom! Engage Destroyer 1! Midway, Troy, Excellence, Liberation, and River Hope are to engage Destroyer 2!" barked Preston Cole through the communications. "Black Stone, Genesis, Great Fate, Lance Held High, Lowrentz, and Tharsis are to target Destroyer 3! Virginia Capes, Waterloo, Dawn of Suns, Defender, Straits of Demons, and Wings of Creation! Your target is Destroyer 4! The remaining ships are to engage the Covenant Battleship! Weapons free!"

The large group of UNSC vessels separated into several small groups, flying to their respective targets with weapons hungering for blood. The smaller Covenant vessels quickly opened fire on the oncoming UNSC vessels with their plasma weapons, striking the shields of the vessels. Within the Fires of Freedom, Captain Lyons Summerton quickly held on to a nearby handle as his vessel was rocked with another volley of plasma. He quickly regained his bearings and looked at his target through his vessel's viewing class.

"Damage report!" barked the blonde haired captain.

"Shields are down to 64% sir! We have a few breaches in Decks F to G and there is a small power leak from Archer Pods 20 to 35!" quickly replied the officer who looked scared out of his wits. "Engineers are trying to fix that currently. Austerlitz and Constantinople report that their shields are down to 43% and 57% respectively. Austerlitz also reports that they are venting really badly but are still able to continue."

"Order Austerlitz to hold back and get Maelstrom to stand beside the Freedom! Arm the MACs and all Archer Pods! Get our guns to clear out those incoming fighters that are getting through our Longswords!"

"_Maelstrom_ is moving beside us sir and all vessels are powering MACs with all weapons ready to fire," reported his communication officer. "They're waiting on your call sir."

Outside the vessel, several of the 50mm Point-Defense guns opened up, unleashing a stream of lead towards the oncoming aggressors. Several of them were quickly destroyed after the bullets pierced their shields. However, a small quantity were able to fly through the rain of bullets.

"All hands, brace for impact!" roared the captain as he tightly held onto his chair, preparing for the impending impact on the vessel. However, it never came and confusion filled the air as the bridge officers loosened themselves.

"_Freedom_, this is Sentinel-1, enemy fighters have been destroyed," stated the pilot as his Longsword flew pass the bridge. "My squadron will remain here with you until Destroyer-1 is taken down."

"Roger that Sentinel-1," replied the Communication's Officer before looking at Captain Summerton. With a nod from the blonde captain, the officer rotated his chair.

"_Austerlitz_, Maelstrom, _and _Constantinople_, _you are clear to open fire! I repeat, weapons free!"

With that order, the four vessels unloaded their MAC guns and Archer missiles on the solo vessel. The projectiles flew bold and true towards the their target. As expected, several neon pink beams of light shot from the hull of the vessel, striking the incoming Archers and destroying a large fraction of them. However, the rest of the projectiles made impact and a large oval resembling the shields flickered as the explosions struck it.

"The shield is holding but from the looks of it, it won't last another volley," observed an officer before looking at his panel. "Reload is commencing, we are 120 seconds from the Pods and the MACs are good for second shot."

Before anybody could say anything, a barrage of purple blasts flew past the bridge. Summerton turned and watched in horror as the barrage nailed _Austerlitz_, causing the vessel to explode in a ball of fire. Unfortunately, the explosion triggered the armed Archer missiles in the Pods and it struck _Constantinople_.

"Sir, we lost all hands on _Austerlitz_ and _Constantinople_ has suffered a large amount of damage. The captain is evacuating his men, sending all available troops and vehicles to either _Everest_ or _Freedom_."

"_Freedom_, _this is Sentinel-1," called the pilot. "The Covenant vessel launched more fighters and we lost a few squadrons. Whatever you're planning on doing, you better do it now or these fighters will be on your arse soon," reported the lead pilot. "Their Point Defense system is too strong for us to get close enough to provide you some cover."

"Roger that Sentinel," responded Lyon as he looked at his target with narrowed eyes. "Provide as much cover as you can. See if you can divert some of the fighters to cover the transfer of units from

Constantinople."

"Roger that sir. I'll divert Sentinel-6 to 12 along with Chimera Squadron for it."

The minutes flew by as shots were traded between the UNSC vessels and the Covenant vessel tagged Destroyer-1. A large quantity of the shots were wide and were easily avoided through quick maneuvering. It continued to be this way until the silence was broken by a message.

"_Freedom_, this is _Constantinople_, all free and non-necessary crew members have been evacuated from the ship," reported the CO.

"Roger that," responded the Captain before he watched as another volley flew by and struck the grey UNSC ship that was floating beside _Freedom._

"_Constantinople_, _can you read me? _Constantinople_?" asked the frantic captain.

"Captain, this is CAG," said a strained voice through the communication system. "Both the XO and the CO were lost in that volley. I've been told that we lost the MAC along with the firing system for the Archers. They'll basically be flying blind. Summerton, we're a sitting duck here..."

"Give me a minute-"

"NO! I know what needs to be done, just make sure that you give _Constantinople_ gets some covering fire."

"Don't you dare do it, Jared!"

"Too late... The SHIVA is already armed and all power has been diverted to the forward shields and the engines. It's been an honor serving with you..."

With that, the link broke and the blonde Captain could only watch as the broken and flaming vessel lurked towards the Covenant craft with unexpected speed.

"Damn it! Give them cover! I repeat, give them cover!"

At that moment, the two remaining vessels unleashed hell, launching everything from Archers to MAC rounds while the broken _Constantinople_ flew straight. The fighters rocketed from their defensive positions and started to engage the swarming fighters flying towards the charging UNSC ship. The shields flickered occasionally as the blasts from the continuous stream of armaments bombarded the ship.

It all happened in slow motion as the flaming UNSC vessel impacted the Covenant vessel and caused an explosion. The flames spread from bow to stern, igniting the armed Archer missiles and it wasn't long before the Shiva lit. In a flash of white, yellow, and blue, the two colliding ships disintegrated into nothing with the shockwave pushing back the two remaining ships.

"_Maelstrom_, this is _Freedom_, we've got some Covenant to

sink."

'I won't let your sacrifice go in vain, Jared.'

On another part above Harvest, another five UNSC vessels were striking another Covenant vessel, called Destroyer-2. This group of UNSC vessels were experiencing the some of the same problems as they were forced to stick at a range that strained the main weapons system. One vessel, the UNSC Liberation, led the fight as her CO, Commander Elizabeth Mansfield, looked on with a precise gaze. Her medium length black hair was brushed behind her back and her storm grey eyes peering at her target.

"Get Midway and Troy ready for another strafe with their MACs," she ordered smoothly. "Liberation, Excellence, and River Hope will give them cover fire."

"Ma'am, Herald, Delta, and Hound squadron are reporting," stated an officer. "Reinforcements are coming in from other squads. Seems that one of the Covenant vessels were taken down. Freedom is on their way here as well."

"Good, we need the help."

The relief was quickly washed away as several broadsides roared from the enemy designated as Destroyer-2. It came quickly and nothing could have been done to prevent them as they made impact on the two charging UNSC vessels. They halted as explosions rocketed the surface, engulfing the two in two independent balls of yellow flames. They let loose a shockwave that pushed everything a few meters away.

"Ma'am... We lost all hands on both Troy and Midway."

"Damn it! What will it take to take these bastards down?"

As if answering her question, a hail of artillery rained down on the purple ship, covering it in explosions. Beside the Liberation, a similar looking vessel appeared with the only differences being the name 'Fires of Freedom' being painted on the and white steam venting from the sides in large amounts.

"Hello Lizzie, it seems that you need some help," said a voice over the communication channel, bringing a small smile on her face.

"Summerton, you're late. I expected you not to make it," she said with a small tease while motioning for the officers to continue firing the vessel's weapons. "I guess better late than never."

"Aw... Didn't know you cared."

"So how do we take they down?"

"We need a lot of things hitting it at once, basically lowering the shields for a nuke or a constant barrage of artillery."

"We can give that," she stated as she started the reload sequence for the main weapons. "We lost the connection to a handful

of our Archers but we're trying to get it fixed. _Excellence_ is in reload sequence and _River Hope_ is unloading their payload right now."

In the bridge of _Fires of Freedom_, Lyons looked as the explosions from the barrage made contact with the shield of their objective, causing it to flicker on and off. It hit him like a brick as his eyes widened before turning to his Weapons Chief and Communication's Officer.

"Tell _Liberation_ and the other vessels to target near this point of the ship," he said as he pointed at a place near the rear. "There is a large quantity of heat and plasma radiating from there. I'm willing to guess that their engine is located there. If not, something important which could make a big boom."

With a sharp nod, the two officers did as they were told with one training the main weapons to the mentioned area while the other conveyed the message. With a green light being passed from _Freedom_, all four UNSC naval vessels unloaded all Archers and MAC rounds, firing them as fast as they could reload them. The attacks struck with a large flame as they punctured the shields and striking the slipspace drive. A large black hole erupted from the center of the ship before quickly disappearing. The target designated Destroyer-2 was completely split in half with a large amount of it disintegrated.

"Thanks Lyons..." mumbled the female commander. "Owe you one..."

"How about a beer when we get back?" asked the blonde captain. "After all this mess is done of course."

"Maybe... Let's go help the others first."

"Ladies first."

"No please, age before beauty."

With a quick chuckle, the remaining ships fired their engines before heading for the next engagement.

With Destroyer-3, the six UNSC ships were having an easier time in overwhelming the incoming fighters from the vessel with the larger quantity of cannons. However, they were having more trouble in assaulting the Covenant vessel without taking damage. It proved to be rather irritating for the group's leader within UNSC _Lowrentz_, causing him to call a charge with all weapons blazing.

Within the bridge of _Genesis_, Captain Troy Daniels looked absolutely livid as he barked out the orders relayed to him by his CO.

"But sir, wouldn't it be better to strike them at a range?"

"Our CO in _Lowrentz_ doesn't think so and has called for a charge," replied the brown haired middle age man with evident anger. "Their broadsides could wipe us out quickly and there isn't much we can do about it. All of the other ships have acknowledged the order, even if it was hesitantly."

"All vessels, this is _Lowrentz_. All vessels charge!"

With those words, the six ships roared to life as they unleashed hell in their own form. Missiles flew in all directions and MAC rounds flew straight and true, shelling the enemy shields. However, as Daniels predicted, the broadsides of the intended target lit up as it launched a large amount of plasma towards the incoming grey UNSC navy. It basically was a slug fest as blows were traded between the two sides.

"Sir! _Lance Held High _has reported that they're dead in the water! They have lost power to their engines but they are continuing to fire!" reported Daniel's officer. "_Tharsis _was lost with all hands from the barrage. _Lowrentz _was lost as well..."

"Damn it!" shouted the man in anger as fire burned in his eyes.

"Sir, what are your orders?"

"Prep the SHIVA and order all vessels to continue shelling them! We're going to whittle their shields down bit by bit!"

"2 minutes until SHIVA is ready for launch," reported the Weapon's Officer. "Shields are currently at 48%."

"We won't be able to hold sir," cried someone from the background. "We should retreat."

"NO!" roared the Captain. "We will hold our ground! Get _Black Stone _and _Great Fate _to rotate over and provide us with a distraction. Call for the evacuation of _Lance Held High _as quickly as they can and see if we can have some Longswords to defend them."

"_Genesis_, this is Sentinel squadron," crackled the channel. "Need some breathing room?"

"More than anything pilot! _Lance Held High _is currently being evacuated and I need 2 minutes to take this ship down."

"Roger that sir. We'll give you your space."

"Sir! They're targeting the _Lance_!"

All who were nearby could only watch in horror as the disabled grey vessel was blasted with a barrage of purple plasma. It only took a matter of seconds before it exploded in a ball of flames. Silence reigned supreme within the bridge.

"ETA until the SHIVA is ready?"

"30 seconds sir. How are we going to launch this?"

"Aim for the middle of the impact points from _Fate _and _Black Stone_."

"Roger that sir."

"For our fallen comrades, brothers and sisters in arms..."

"SHIVA is ready for launch."

"Launch everything at that point!"

From the bowels of the grey ship, missiles and all kinds of artillery fired, impacting the desired strike zone and the target's fate was the same as the others. Complete destruction.

Vice-Admiral Cole looked bleakly at the Battleship class vessel his ships were facing against. The shields were slowly being whittled away through the constant barrage of weapons from the ships and he didn't possess the same fire power he had before his Battle Group separated. His thoughts were quickly broken by his Comms. Officer, who he learned was named Naomi Tsuki.

"Sir, we have broadcasts coming from UNSC vessels," she stated, earning her a small smile from the normally serious man.

"Patch them through," he responded and he was quickly greeted by the faces of four humans.

"Admiral, this is Captain Summerton, we have taken out the target designated Destroyer-1. Losses are UNSC Austerlitz and UNSC Constantinople. We went to assist the other groups and during the engagement with Destroyer-4 UNSC Maelstrom was lost with all hands."

"Admiral, Commander Mansfield. Destroyer-2 was taken down with the help of Freedom. However, we lost both Midway and Troy in the process."

"Sir, Captain Daniels, acting CO of my group. We lost Lance Held High, Lowrentz, and Tharsis before taking down Destroyer-3."

"Commander Davis, we lost Virginia Capes and Waterloo during the conflict. Maelstrom along with Freedom came to assist us. However, Maelstrom was lost with all hands before Destroyer-4 was taken down."

"Have your units regroup with Everest," ordered the veteran. "We're going to crack this battleship."

With a unison nod, the four figures disappeared from the screen and allowed Preston to look at the current situation at hand.

"Orders sir?"

"Continue the barrage. We should be able to whittle them down a little more before our ships get here."

The order was relayed and confirmed as several barrages were launched, striking their target. Like waking a sleeping bear, the sides opened up with a barrage of plasma that went by quickly. It lit up two ships as they completely consumed them in a ball of fire.

"Sir, Campo Grande and Sacramento were just lost with all hands and our shields were reduced to 37% with that barrage."

"Looks like the cavalry came just in time," muttered Cole loud enough for his bridge to hear him as they saw the incoming group of UNSC vessels. It was a sight for sore eyes as they started to unleash a storm of projectiles that added with the current one.

"Our weapons are doing little against them sir! We need to retreat!" pleaded a captain from another ship before a realization hit the admiral.

'They must be using a stronger version of energy shields than Destroyers 1-4,_' _thought Cole with wide eyes.

"Launch everything we have! Fire as soon as it's reloaded! We're going to pop that bubble!" ordered Cole. The remaining vessels launched everything, each of it making contact with the bulky ship. It wasn't just going to stand the abuse as it launched everything it could in the form of plasma broadsides along with Point Defense systems. The beams were able to cut several dozens of the missiles but it wasn't enough as they exploded upon the shield.

As expected, the shields burst from the amount of ammunition striking it. However, they were not prepared for the sudden increase of purple dots to emerge from the Battleship. Cole quickly noted that they weren't heading for the Battle Group, but rather at Harvest. He quickly made a decision that impacted Harvest.

"Longsword squadrons Swordsman, Dragon, Omega, and Raven are to engage the fleeing vessels," barked Cole. "Sentinel, Emerald, Protector, and Daedalus are to defend the UNSC vessels from enemy fighters. The rest are to engage the Battleship."

Affirmatives echoed throughout the channel as the respective sailors, gunners, and pilots followed their orders. Fighters rocketed from their initial position and towards their respective targets while the UNSC naval vessels unleashed another rain of explosives that made impact with the Covenant.

Flying. Something that made her feel free from the world, even though she was trapped within an enclosed space with three others. Captain Lauren Mattinson of Swordsman Longsword squadron controlled her fighter/interceptor in a way so that she was lined up with the large swarm of Covenant targets. Steeling her nerves, she looked at her co-pilot, a black hair male named Joseph Jameson, and nodded. He flipped several switches before nodding back. She, in turn, swallowed the bile that had gathered in her throat before speaking into her radio.

"All wings, this Swordsman-Lead," she called. "Report in. Weapons check."

"Swordsman-12 is set. All weapons armed and ready."

"Swordsman-2, ready up. Weapons warm."

"Swordsman-3 green. Weapons armed."

"Swordsman-6, ready. Weapons are good."

"Swordsman-4 is go. Weapons are green."

"Swordsman-10 is go. Guns itching for a fight."

"Swordsman-5, standing by. Guns are ready."

"Swordsman-7, green. Missiles are ready."

"Swordsman-8 is go. Weapons are armed and ready."

"Swordsman-11 standing by. Weapons are hot."

"Swordsman-9 standing by. Tangos won't know what hit them."

"Cut the chatter Swordsman-9," ordered the female captain before listening in as the other Longsword squadrons reported in.

"Swordsman-Lead, this is Dragon-Lead," crackled the radio. "All wings are ready for the engagement. Waiting on your call."

"Tally ho ladies and gents, inbound in 4 klicks. Get ready for a fight."

It would be a matter of seconds before the flock of UNSC Longswords were within firing range of the Covenant ships.

"Weapons free. Light these bastards up."

The large, grey fighters swooped in at a downward angle towards their targets before unloading a hail of bullets. While they were shielded, the sheer amount of rounds impacting them made them useless and they started to fall quickly. It wouldn't take long before a third were destroyed just from the initial assault.

"All wings break off, take them down before they get to Harvest!" ordered Mattinson as she pulled the yolk hard, turning her fighter quickly to face another Covenant ship before lighting it up with a storm of rounds. "Swordsman-2, you're with me."

If anyone were to look at the massive dogfight from afar, it would seem like a swarm of insects attacking each other with a mirage of colors with some of them exploding in a small ball of flames. Red streaks of tracer rounds and the purplish blue of plasma flew everywhere as fighters engaged in a massive dance where there would only be one survivor of the duo. The radio was flooded with warnings, shouts, curses, and much more as the fight continued to drag on.

"Watch your tail, Raven-3!"

"Dragon-6 just went down!"

"This is Swordsman-10, I've hit!"

"Coming to cover you, Omega-3."

"Wave of fighters inbound to your position Raven-7!"

"Swordsman-7, Omega-5, we are bingo fuel! Need escort!"

"Dragon-12, bank left! Bank left!"

The chatter was loud and an earful but it saved the lives of many as the Longswords were able to take down two for every one they lost. While they were heavily outnumbered, their experience was great and they were able to show it through a sudden diminishing of the targets. It wasn't long before only a small handful remained being pursued by a quantity of fighters.

"Anyone in range?" radioed Captain Newmanson of Dragon squadron.
"They're moving faster than I can aim!"

"Negative ma'am, I'm out of bullets and missiles aren't getting a lock on them."

"This is Omega-4, I have a lock-"

The pilot was quickly silenced as a Covenant vessel rammed into him, causing both to explode in flames. Anger coursed through the captain's veins as she looked around for a possible target to vent at in the form of bullets.

"Any left?" she questioned as she grinded her teeth in frustration.

"Negative. The rest were handled quickly by the other squadrons."

"Well, all wings are to ROTB for rearming if they haven't come close to taken that ship down."

Affirmatives came around as the squadrons turned towards their respective vessels with engines at full power.

With the UNSC vessels, they were able to cause massive damage to the vessel but nothing of their normal weapons were able to do the damage needed to completely cripple or destroy it. Cole looked at frustration and knew that there was only one thing left in the armory that could possibly work.

'Archers are just denting it and MAC rounds are barely able to pierce the outer shell,' thought the Vice Admiral. _'The only thing left are the nukes but there would be a chance that the radiation will get into Harvest's atmosphere.'_

"Sir, we're throwing everything we have at it," reported the Gunnery Officer. "Nothing is doing significant damage."

"There is one thing left..."

"But sir-"

"What choice do we have? _Everest _will launch its whole nuclear arsenal and let's pray that it does something..."

"Yes sir. The missiles are being loaded right now."

Cole looked at the current engagement at hand and let out a sigh. If anything he was glad that somehow, their constant barrage was able to stop the firing of the Covenant vessel and thus preventing them from

losing any more ships. He was brought out of his musing when two officers came to him.

"Nuclear payload is ready, we need your authorization to launch them sir."

"Vice-Admiral Preston Jeremiah Cole, service number 00814-13094-BQ. I authorize the usage of the nuclear payload of the _Everest_."

With a nod, the Gunnery Officer inserted his key into a slot just as Cole did and with a nod, both turned their respective keys at the same time. It caused a dull button that lied in between both of them to light up.

"Are they locked on the target?"

"Yes sir."

His hands touched the button, almost caressing it, before softly pushing it. Outside in the vacuum of space, several panels slid off to reveal several warheads and in a matter of seconds, they launched from their respective platforms. Flying straight and true, they mixed in with the rest of the missiles and other armaments. The defense system started to activate, unknown of the fate that was about to happen, and started to fire their beams to try and lessen the crowd. It was too late as the nuclear missiles impacted the remaining Covenant vessel, causing a blinding white light to abruptly emerge.

Waves emerged from the impact, pushing everything back. Everyone could only watch and wait as the light slowly dimmed back into the blackness of space. What they saw shocked them all. The Covenant vessel remained but it was split completely in half, with a multitude of parts of all shapes and sizes floating everywhere.

"It's over," muttered Cole as he listened to his crew behind him cheer in joy. He was proud and damn glad that it was over but at what cost. There was a feeling, a small thought that this was just the beginning, that this was only one of the several battles that they would have to face. For now, Harvest's space is clear and now, they would have to fight to clear the planet from the Covenant.

It would be a matter of hours before the remains of Battle Group X-Ray were able to comfortably station themselves in orbit of Harvest after taking a decisive win. Vice Admiral Cole looked at his fellow commanding officers and flight leaders with a grim look.

"13 vessels destroyed along with 58 Longswords. Omega and Raven squadrons experienced the most losses with both of them losing 9 of their 12," stated Cole. "These losses were great but we were able to prevail."

"Sir, what is our current course of actions?" asked Captain Summerton.

"I have received orders from Earth," he said, causing everyone to tense up. "We are to hold here and defend it from any further attacks until reinforcements arrive to help us take the planet back. They're pretty sure that the Covenant will be back with more ships."

"And what do you think sir?" asked Commander Mansfield, with her normal calculating look on her face.

"They'll be back and we better be ready for a fight because this may be the fight of our lives. Humanity needs to be ready and I pray that we are."

****Review and constructive advice would be greatly appreciated. No flames. Seriously.****

2. Revelations

****A/N: Thanks for the reviews readers. As for those who don't understand military talk, I will be placing something akin to a dictionary right after the chapter. Anyway, here's chapter 2.****

****Disclaimer: I do not own the Halo or plot line. I do own the OCs, new weapons, and vessels within this story.****

****Chapter 2****

The dark reaches of space and not once did humanity ever think that it would ever encounter a race with a dedication to eradicate them from the planet, much less a coalition of species whose goal was to exterminate humanity. It had only been a few days since the battle for Harvest, dubbed the Second Battle of Harvest, where Vice-Admiral Cole and Battle Group X-Ray reclaimed the space above the agricultural world by destroying the Covenant vessels that were currently orbiting the planet.

Preston Cole stood within the confines of the bridge of the UNSC Everest, it's personnel working firmly to ensure the safety of the group. He had taken time to talk with the four COs within X-Ray, the respective leaders that took charge in order to destroy the Covenant Destroyers. There wasn't another attack and it troubled him greatly. He was brought out of his musing by a female officer appearing just within his peripherals.

"Sir, we have the COs of the Battle Group on channel 1," mentioned Naomi, his communication officer on board the Everest. "Do you wish for me to patch them through?"

"Send it to my office, Naomi," replied the old veteran with a sigh before he walked to his office. As soon as he entered, four screens appeared, showing the faces of Captain Lyons Summerton, Commander Elizabeth Mansfield, Captain Troy Daniels, and Commander Theodore Davis. "What is our current progress ladies and gentlemen? And what have we discovered from the combat logs about these Covenant and their vessels?"

"From what we've discovered from the logs, their shields were able to hold up from single fire from a handful of ships but when we focus on them with all weapons like with the Archers and MACs, they quickly went down after several barrages. Their weapons are able to knock down a large amount of our shields in one broadside," reported the only female commander. "Their anti-air weaponry has a larger cool down rate but is more destructive. We believe that's why there is a large quantity of them when compared to our vessels. That also means

that they have a stronger and greater power core."

"As for Harvest, drops are being prepared as we speak," answered Captain Summerton. "We'll be dropping in the Bifrost region, the southwestern of Edda. Our FOBs will be operating there for now until we can have something stronger."

"ODSTs will be HALO dropping in a couple clicks northeast of Summerton's desired landing zone," mentioned Commander Davis. "They'll be clearing the field for your lads before joining up with Mansfield's troops."

"My men will be dropping at the Harvest Reactor Complex," said Commander Mansfield as she shook her head to get her hair out of the way. "They'll be investigating the area and see if we can restart that facility. That will be our FOB."

"We'll have armor dropped at both Summerton's and Mansfield's FOBs as soon as they are ready. ODSTs will be dropped prior of Mansfield's deployment in order to clear the sight of any undesirables," said Captain Daniels. "Sir, are we having any form of reinforcements? We won't be able to hold these bases with what we have so far."

"I have just received word that reinforcements are on their way," stated Admiral Cole. "We will be joined by Task Force 14 led by the Spirit Of Fire. They're all outfitted for retaking Harvest while being able to engage in any ship to ship engagement."

"Spirit Of Fire? That would be that old Phoenix-class colony ship that was retrofitted right?" asked Summerton with amusement in his eyes.

"The very same, though I question why you ask."

"My ship was part of Task Force 14 before we volunteered for this mission sir. Shadow Operations for ONI."

Cole's thoughts started to race as soon as the captain mentioned the words 'Shadow Operations' and he needed to know what the true might of the UNSC was. Was it all a mask or is it a large bluff, a placebo, in order to make humanity seem stronger than they think they truly are?

"What is the true might of the UNSC?" he suddenly questioned, earning him silence from the group. "You, captain, have mentioned that you worked in ONI's Shadow Ops, which I am to believe, consist of missions which that are not released to the general public and only for the eyes of specific people. ONI mentioned that the ships I would be leading would be the strongest that the UNSC had to offer and last time I checked, there was nothing out of the ordinary from any of the ships. What are you truly hiding?"

Silence reigned for several minutes before a lone sigh echoed throughout the room. All eyes turned to the source of origin, the lone female commander.

"Admiral, please know that if it were anyone other than you, they would have been killed on the spot," she stated seriously. "ONI knew that there was something out there bigger than humanity and that something we did would eventually step on the toes of those bigger

people. So they started to fund a program called _PROJECT:
INFINITY_."

"What is the purpose of this project?"

"To produce stronger, faster, and overall better technology in the field of warfare," replied the blonde captain. "What you saw was only what we wanted you to see. Out of the fifty plus vessels in this battle group, at least a good twenty are the results of the project."

"Then why did you fail to mention your capabilities to me? We could have saved the people on those thirteen vessels!"

"These weapons wouldn't have been able to make a difference. All most of them were made for defensive purposes," answered the male commander. "The only offensive weapon from the program were the Primus Deck Guns."

"What do we have that came from the program?" asked Cole with seriousness etched on his face.

"First is the Primus Deck Guns, capable of firing 50 ton ferric slugs at high muzzle speeds. It uses the same concept as the MAC guns but aren't able to do as much damage. These Deck Guns have four cannons, two attached on each side and there are about 30 scattered around each ship from _INFINITY_," informed Lyons. "They require a large power supply and at the rate we were spending power through constant barrages, we were not able to utilize them at all. It's especially because we were repeatedly firing the MACs. They haven't created a power supply strong enough to power it all."

"Next is the Overlord Missile Defense System. It is a program that targets any fighters who aren't giving a friendly IFF and launches a missile to destroy it," added Elizabeth. "However, if the missiles miss, the system will not track that fighter but rather lock on something else and fire on it. It's somewhat akin of the Fire and Forget missiles of the 20th and 21st Century."

"Lastly is the Pulse Flares. They are glowing blue mines that are ejected and explode when something nears it. They weren't meant to counter plasma based weaponry but rather rounds and missiles so they weren't really used throughout the battle," said Theodore. "However, I believe ONI will like to hear that they make great mines after a few modifications."

"So it was basically a lie then?" stated Cole blankly.

"ONI didn't lie to you, they told you the truth in the fact that in a slug fest, these vessels would be able to come out on top with no problem."

"They weren't only focusing on advances on UNSC vessels but also in the weapons and armor that our men will have on the ground. _Spirit Of Fire_ will be bringing some new gear for us to work with."

"Let's hope that they will be strong enough. They told us to fight, and that's what we've done," started Cole as he looked at their eyes. "Now let's get the Covenant off of our planet."

With that, the four figures nodded and the screens disappeared from view. Cole just grabbed a nearby chair and sat down in it, not knowing of what should be done given the most recent events. ONI had started a program that was unknown to everyone but them and they were creating ways to strengthen the military arm of the UNSC in ways that he couldn't comprehend. But he knew one thing, the Covenant was going to pay.

Harvest, Bifrost Region

The blue skies of Harvest were a beautiful sight and the white covered trees were nothing short of gorgeous as they waved with the wind. It was a sight that no one could expect on a battle torn world and yet here it was. One particular person watched with interest as the snow blew with the wind. While they were covered in heavy armor, they could feel the cold touch and the lack of warmth.

"Colonel, Chief!"

Both figures turned to watch as a white clad soldier ran towards them with his gun bouncing up and down from its placement around his back. A tinted visor covered the face of the soldier but they knew that something was up and they turned to watch as the person stopped before saluting to the two.

"Orders just came in that the rest of the FOB is coming down tomorrow along with the rest of the engineers. Birds will soon be coming down with armor and weapons," reported the soldier. "Scouts have reported that there is some nearby Covenant patrols nearby but nothing major."

"Good, what vehicles do we have available currently?" asked the colonel. "Let's see if we can find any nearby Covenant bases nearby before we move to the Reactor Complex."

"Claire, we have an ODST HALO drop in five hours at the Complex. It's at least twelve klicks out from here," stated the chief. "Let's go grab them before we head out."

"Fine, grab Desolator Company and let's move. I need some Hogs Robert, and I needed them yesterday!"

The male named Robert tapped the side of his helmet while he started to walk in the direction that the soldier came from. Radio static came through the snowstorm that surrounded them before the sound of a human voice broke it.

"Bifrost FOB, this is Chief Waterfield," he stated. "I need Desolator Company at my location with Hogs and supplies for the trip to Harvest Reactor. I repeat, have Deso Company rendezvous at my location with Hogs and supplies for the trip to Harvest Reactor."

Static reigned for a few seconds before a response was sent.

"Roger that chief, Deso Company is on their way to your location with Hogs and supplies," reported the dispatcher. "ETA is 5 mikes, repeat ETA is 5 mikes."

"Claire, ETA is 5 mikes," reported Robert as he turned to face his CO. The soldier pulled the helmet off to reveal her heart shaped face

and piercing dark yellow eyes. Her pink hair draped on her shoulders, before she shook her head to remove the snow that had landed on it.

"You would think that with all the new toys that they supply us with, they would make comfier helmets," stated Claire as she placed her helmet back on her head.

"They're to protect your head," stated Robert with amusement.

"Well sir-"

The soldier never got to finish his sentence as a beam of light pierced his body, right where his heart was. His body fell to the ground with the red blood soaking into the white snow, staining it with its color.

"Sniper!" called Robert as he swung his rifle about and rushed to a nearby snow covered rock. The pink haired colonel had done the same thing as she grabbed her rifle and ran for some cover in the form of solid landscape.

"Deso Company, this is Colonel Halls," called the female Colonel as she placed her back on the cold, rocky surface. "We have a sniper at our location, repeat sniper at our location!"

As soon as she ended her message, a bright beam grazed the rock, causing pieces to fly into the air. She looked at her fellow officer hiding behind a large piece of rock as he also endured a similar fate. Steeling her nerves, she moved her head to the side, allowing her to see her attackers. What she saw made her eyes narrow before retreating her head as a bolt of plasma phased through the area where it was before.

"Waterfield, we have Covies up top," she said through her radio. "Looks bigger than a scouting party."

"Raiding party maybe," he answered back. "They might have seen our landing. Take them down?"

"Colonel Hall, this is Deso-5, we are one mike from your location," played the radio. "Covenant forces have been located on top a nearby cliff by one of our birds."

"Deso-5, you are cleared to go weapons free," ordered the female colonel. As soon as she said that, a bright light pierced the snow before more pairs of lights started to appear. The snow parted to reveal the well known UNSC vehicle, the M12 Light Reconnaissance Vehicle aka the Warthog, and they came in guns blazing. They slid so that the passenger side was pointing their targets before stopping with their M41 spitting out 12.7x99mm armor piercing bullets at insane rates.

At that moment, several soldiers clad in white jumped out of the Warthogs with guns aimed at the ridge where the Covenant had set up. Their tinted helmets gave no sign of emotion on their faces as they unleashed a barrage of bullets from their weapons. The aliens had to turn their focus on the larger force of humans as they tried to take aim with their purple or blue weapons. A pair of the light vehicles had taken the distraction to drive at the location of the two

stranded soldiers.

"Damn glad to see you here," stated Colonel Hall as she grabbed the offered hand from the soldier within the back before offering her hand to pull up Chief Waterfield. "Took you guys long enough."

"Sorry ma'am," responded the driver. "Traffic was rough to get here."

"Well, get us the out here."

"Roger that. All Hogs, this is Hog-3, package has been acquired," stated the driver as he slammed the gas. "Pull out. Pull out."

With those words, the soldiers hopped back into their respective vehicles with the gunners on top giving them enough cover to make a clean get away.

"So what do you have?" asked the female colonel as soon as they were out of range.

"That bird that spotted you also reported that they spotted a Covenant base nearby," reported the soldier on the passenger seat. "They said it looks really new and that there wasn't much there."

"Relay this information to _Everest_. They might want to know about this. And tell them that we're heading to the mountains."

UNSC Everest

Within the confines of _Everest_, Vice Admiral Cole looked down on the planet of Harvest with a calculating gaze. It had been a handful of weeks since they reclaimed the space above Harvest and several days since they were told that they were being reinforced with Task Force 14.

"Sir, we have a message from Colonel Hall," reported an officer, breaking Cole out of his thoughts. "They stated that a Covenant base was found several clicks from the Bifrost FOB and are requesting further orders."

"Tell them to-"

"Sir, contact!" shouted another officer. "Slipspace rupture!"

"All hands! Battle stations!" roared Cole as he sat down in his seat, his eyes glaring at the hole that had just emerged. "What are we looking at?"

"Covenant ships sir, they just exited the portal. There are ten of them but they are all Destroyer class."

"..."

"Sir, what are our orders?"

"Get me Captain Summerton."

"Sir?"

"Do it."

It took a matter of seconds before the blonde haired captain answered.

"What can I do for you sir?"

"Show me."

"Very well sir," stated the captain of the Fires of Freedom. Suddenly, several of the UNSC vessels of Battle Group X-Ray started to move as a single unit while Cole just watched with interest. From what they had told him, these vessels were all from the INFINITY project. They were positioned just below the Everest, giving him a perfect sight of the events about to occur. On the tops of these selected UNSC vessels, several turrets rose from within them and pointed their guns at the oncoming Covenant.

"Naomi, get the other ships on the horn," said Cole, earning her attention. "Tell them to warm up the MACs and prepare the Archer pods in case things go FUBAR. Also, arm any remaining SHIVAs that we have."

The female communication officer nodded her head before heading to her station to relay the message to the other vessels.

Inside of the Fires Of Freedom, Captain Summerton looked upon his targets. His crew were working frantically to make sure everything was ready for the show they were about to put. Other vessels were doing the same thing as they armed every weapon they possessed.

"Status of the Primus?"

"Rounds are set, power is being diverted from the MAC," reported the Weapons Officer. "Broadsides are ready for barrage."

"Status of all ships?"

"Green, sir. They are waiting for your orders."

"Tell all vessels to aim at that lead vessel, assign that as Destroyer-1."

"Yes sir. All vessels acknowledge the order and have aimed all Primus batteries at Destroyer-1."

It seemed like several hours had passed when in reality, only a few minutes flew by as the slow stalemate continued. As if an unseen sign was given, Summerton's eyes widened.

"Fire!"

The new Primus Deck Guns unloaded their payload, firing a salvo of 50 ton ferric slugs in pairs from each turret. From afar, it would look like miniature explosions were covering the tops of these vessels. The slugs travelled straight and true as they struck their targets. A large blue shield encompassed their target and it flickered with

every explosion that splattered on it.

"Report!"

"Their shields are holding but only barely. All vessels are continuing the barrage."

The continuous broadside unleashed what seemed to be an infinite amount of rounds, striking their sole target in a matter of seconds. One of the many slugs made impact with the large shield and the explosion caused many within the UNSC vessel to cry out in happiness. It had burst the shield and the rounds were now causing massive damage on the external structures and in a matter of seconds, it exploded in a ball of blue and purple.

However, the Covenant had recognized the fire power that they possessed and began to turn their ships on their sides in order to begin their own barrage of broadsides.

"Sir!"

"I'm aware! Get all vessels to load up the Archers and target designated Destroyer-2!" he ordered. "And see if we're in range for Overlords."

"What are thinking about doing, Lyons?"

"Using everything we have against them."

"Weapons have confirmed that they are entering firing range for the Overlords!"

"Relay the order to change the aiming program to that of the Archers, we're going to pop their bubble. All ships are cleared to open fire! Get _Wings Of Creation, Straits Of Demons, _and _Defender_ to arm their SHIVAs."

"It seems that you require some help, Captain."

With those words, several projectiles flew over the _Fires Of Liberation_. They struck a two out of the remaining nine targets with deadly precision and accuracy, causing large explosions to bombard the blue Covenant shields. However, they were quickly broken from the amount of explosions and it was at that moment that the SHIVAs made impact with the worn and beaten outer shell of the sleek, purple vessels. In a matter of seconds, they were both engulfed in a white flame and sent a massive shockwave that pushed the remaining seven ships away, inadvertently shoving them into each other and causing their shields to flare from the large impact.

"Open fire!" roared Summerton. All heard his command and they unleashed another storm at a single target. With the weakened shields from the combination of the shockwave and the collision, they weren't able to last as long and it exploded in another ball of flames with the debris floating in random directions.

"This is Cole to all vessels, we are-"

Completely unexpected, a large explosion erupts on the hull of several UNSC vessels.

"What happened?!"

"I don't know sir!" replied an officer before looking at his computer and his eyes widening. "We have more Covenant vessels! They're on top of us! Looks like several Battleship class!"

"Damn it! Tell Summerton to get his group and destroy those Destroyers. We'll handle the new ships," ordered the admiral. "Spin up the MAC and get the Archers reloaded! We've got to hold them off!"

UNSC Fires Of Freedom

The crew members slowly regained their bearings within the rocking vessel as more explosions rocked it. Officers started to frantically work on their systems while a red light started to flash brightly throughout the entire ship.

"Report..." grunted a dazed captain.

"Shields are down to 23%," stated an officer before another explosion rocked the vessel. "Now to 11% and we have Decks C to H venting. Response crews are on their way to handle it as we speak. We still have power and control over all weapons except the MAC. The power transfer system between it and the Primus is fried. All of our vessels have been striking the destroyers and have taken down two more. However, they have gotten into firing range of their broadsides."

"So we're stuck with the Primus then," muttered the blonde captain. "What are Cole's orders?"

"We are to take down the rest of the Destroyers and they'll distract them long enough for us to finish them off and help them."

"Sir! We have another barrage coming out way! We can't move out of the way!"

Time seemed to slow for the crew as the wave of purple balls flew towards them. Suddenly, a UNSC vessel flew in between the two, catching the explosion before it struck the weakened ship. Shock coursed through the entire crew but they took the moment to unleash a hail of rounds and missiles into the aggressor, who exploded from the amount of ammunition that it had to endure.

"Sir, channel for you," stated his communication's officer. "Patching it through."

The screen appeared and displayed a female with black hair and familiar grey eyes. It was Elizabeth. And realization struck the man as he looked at her closely. Blood was dripping down from her temple and sparks were appearing from the background.

"Elizabeth!" he called out in dismay.

"Are all you alright?" she asked with concern.

"We're all fine but why did you do it?" he asked.

"Someone has to save your sorry arse all the time..."

"Will she hold?"

"Put more faith in her, I've trusted her in worst conditions."

"Get _Liberation _to hold around the back, we'll continue shelling them."

"Summerton, we're not going-" started the woman with a glare, only to be interrupted by the pleading eyes of the man in front of her. "Fine... We'll head back but I expect to see your sorry butt groundside after this."

"Yeah, after all of this," replied Lyons with a small smile of gratitude before ending the call. "What do we have?"

"We're running out of munitions and we'll be on our last leg soon. The rest were taken down from the focus fire but the rest of our group is running low on everything from Archers and Overlords to rounds."

"What about SHIVAs?"

"It varies between the ships but it ranges from at least three to a dozen."

"We need help..." muttered Summerton before responding to call on his personal channel. "This is Summerton."

"Summerton, it's Cole. We won't be able to hold them off," radioed the admiral. "We were able to take down one of the Battleship class and a handful of the destroyers but we lost a few of our ships."

"Sir, we've finished with our group and en route to your location," responded Lyons. "We'll give you some support."

"Negative captain, pull back," ordered the man.

"But sir-"

"Your ships aren't going to be able to handle this much fire power and I don't want to risk the death of more men. Head for Harvest. My group will follow as soon as yours is safe."

"Yes sir," responded the hesitant captain of the UNSC vessel before ending the call and turning to his crew. "You heard the orders. Relay them to the rest and start pulling out."

"Yes sir," murmured the crew,

"God save us..."

"Sir! Another slipspace rupture! Two ruptures! One of them appearing right behind the Covenant assault force and the other in between them and our vessels!"

UNSC Everest

"Sir, we have two slipspace ruptures!" reported one of his officers. "Shields are currently at 47% and decreasing. We won't be able to hold this position for long!"

"Status of Summerton's group?"

"They're heading for Harvest sir, out of range from what we presume is the maximum range of Covenant weapons."

"Good... Prepare everything, if we're going down, we're going to take some of them with us," ordered Cole. "We won't be able to retreat if those ruptures are from Covenant vessels."

"Sir! Message on Channel 14," cried Naomi in shock. "Patching it through."

"Seems that you need some help, old friend," stated an old voice that made Preston Cole's eyes widen and a small smile to appear on his face. From the portals, several large, grey ships emerged with the UNSC logo painted on their sides. One of the most prominent vessels was the 2.5km vessel that started to unleash all sorts of hell as it launched and fired all of its weapons on the Covenant force. It's name etched in white was shown proudly to the remaining ships in Battle Group X-Ray. Spirit Of Fire.

"Cutter, you're late," stated Cole as he released a breathe that he didn't know he was holding. "But better late than never."

"I believe that the saying goes like that," laughed Captain James Cutter. "Get your ship out of here Preston, we'll clear them out for you and rendezvous with you over the planet. Godspeed."

UNSC Spirit Of Fire

"Serina, how are shields holding right now?" asked Cutter. "And what is the current status of Cole's group?"

From a nearby pedestal, a blue figure appeared in the shape of a young female with long hair and clothes that resembled something akin of a lab coat. She was Serina, a smart AI.

"Shields are currently at 87%," answered Serina. "As for Vice Admiral Cole's Battle Group, the remains are split into two groups. Which group do you wish to know about?"

"Serina..."

"Well, one group under the apparent command of... Oh my... Fires of Freedom," she stated with some form of shock. "Most of the group is heavily damaged with several of them venting at several locations throughout the whole vessel. As for Everest, the group is currently heading for the first group and seems to be trying to meet up with them."

"Good, now let's turn this ship around and give these Covenant a taste of some medicine," ordered Cutter.

Within the blackness of space, the large vessel started to turn to point at the slowly decreasing Covenant group. A large quantity of UNSC vessels ranging in all sizes surrounded them and unleashed their

weapons into the shields.

"The MAC is online and primed," stated Serina with a grin her light blue face. "Payback time!"

"Fire!"

The single MAC on the ship unleashed its slugs aimed at one of the vessels. Four rounds were spat out from the cannon and they flew straight into the core of the nearest ship, detonating in a brilliant fashion. It caused a chain reaction as the rest of the Covenant vessels started to fall from the large concentration of weapons pounding upon it. They didn't give without a fight as they fired all of their weapons into any ship that was in range. Soon, none were left and Task Force 14 was victorious.

"Serina, what are our casualties?" asked the captain wearily.

"19 ships report that they are venting in several decks but are still good. Another 11 state that they received moderate damage and the remaining ships have little to no damage on their vessels," reported the AI a little too cheerfully for crews desire.

"Good," said Cutter, ignoring the AI's tendencies. "Bring us to meet with _Everest_."

"Yes sir!"

It would only take a matter of minutes before the large vessel and it's group of fresh ships met up with the stationary and highly damaged vessels of Cole's group. Cutter had taken the time to walk to the nearest hanger bay.

"Forge, Anders," he called to the two figures standing nearby.

"Sir?" they both asked simultaneously.

"Both of you are coming with me to _Everest_ with the ODSF squad," said the old captain. "We're going to meet up with an old friend of mine."

"Yes sir."

The trio walked towards the nearest aircraft, a D77-TC aka the Pelican. A common aircraft used by the UNSC through the fact that it was extremely versatile in transportation of soldiers, vehicles, and equipment or as a gunship. It's light green color was something that was common on almost all UNSC vehicles. That was when a group of 6 soldiers with similar looking armor spotted them.

"Captain Cutter, Jacob Hayfield sir," stated one of the soldiers. "We're Alacrity ODSF squadron, your detail."

"Good, let's go boys," Cutter ordered as they filed into the Pelican. The door closed shut, enclosing the group within the aircraft and it was then that someone spoke.

"Sir, not to be rude or anything," started the soldier named Forge. "But what are we doing here?"

"Sergeant, we're here to protect _Everest_ along with Harvest," replied Cutter as he looked the man in the eyes.

"That's not what I meant sir. I mean there were other Task Force, hell even fleets who could have been a better group than us to support Harvest. But why were we selected out of the rest?"

"I would like to say that I do know but in reality, I don't," answered Cutter with a sigh as he took off his cap before running his hand through his white hair. "It may be because of my history. Cole had selected our Task Force as the group to reinforce them out of the many others. In the times we had to talk, we've become something akin to acquaintances, friends even. But I do not know why we were chosen."

"In other words, Vice Admiral Preston Cole chose us with no other influence other than himself?" asked the only female in the group.

"Professor, that may be true but I think that we may have an influence in the form of a Lyons Summerton, the captain of the _Fires of Freedom_, " said the old captain.

This earned him a chuckle from the group before the pilot announced something through the radio.

"We're now approaching the _Everest_, " said the pilot. "Touchdown in one mike."

The landing was hardly felt by the passengers before the rear door opened to reveal the metal floors of a UNSC vessel. Cutter took this time to stand up before heading out. He was instantly greeted with the face of the famous UNSC CO, Preston Cole. However, there were two other people there, one of them being extremely familiar to the man.

"Sir," said the captain with a salute.

"It's good to see you Captain," answered Cole as he saluted back. "You saved our hide back there and I'm grateful for that. And I believe that you recognize one person here."

"Lyons, it's good to see," greeted Cutters warmly as he looked at the young blonde man before seeing some blood that had stained his uniform. "It seems that you all experienced a rough battle. I'm glad we were able to make it in time to prevent more death and destruction."

"It's good to see you too Captain Cutter," replied Lyons. "I believe you too haven't met but this is Commander Elizabeth Mansfield."

"Ah yes... I believe that you have mentioned her a few times before you left for this mission," stated Cutter, earning him a light blush from both. "It is nice to finally meet you Commander, Captain

"Summerton has told us nothing but good things about you."

"W-Why thank you Captain," she replied back as she tried to regain

control of her emotions.

"Why don't we take this conversation to the meeting room?" asked Cole, to which Cutter responded with a nod. "Captain, I hope that you were able to fully stock before heading here."

"We did sir. All kinds of gear for retaking Harvest like you mentioned."

They continued to walk for a minute before entering a room with a table displaying a large map. The female professor and Forge quickly started to analyze it while the six ODS from _Spirit Of Fire_ positioned themselves around the room.

"This is a map of Harvest, or rather part of it. We have a FOB here at the Bifrost currently and a second FOB at the Harvest Reactor Complex," said Cole as he pointed at the region. "Right now, my Battle Group doesn't have the forces or the supplies to hold these bases for long."

"And that's why you asked for my Task Force in particular," added Cutter. "We're one of the few groups that can supply several bases at once while helping an assault."

"Correct. A few hours ago, one of our ODS companies reported that they encountered a Covenant assault force and our Bifrost FOB reported that one of their birds had scouted a base several clicks out."

"What are your orders sir?"

"Reinforce Desolator ODS Company and help them take out that Covenant base."

"Sir, do we have a current location on Desolator Company?" asked Sergeant Forge as he looked at the map.

"Last time we heard from them, they were heading towards the mountains," replied Captain Summerton. "All of our ships sustained quite a bit of damage and haven't been able to pinpoint their exact location. However, we do know that they are around this area, right by this mountain range."

"The geography suggests that the mountain range is at least 4km tall," stated the professor before she examined at a specific spot within the range. "However, there is a valley here. From the scale of this map, I would estimate that it is about 1 to 2 km wide."

"Perfect spot for a drop," muttered Forge before looking at Cutter. "If you can get comms back up with that company, there might be a chance to get an ODS drop at that location."

"Rather a small target space, isn't it?"

"What about intelligence?" asked Commander Mansfield, her looks restoring to the calculating ones she had before. "We don't know their count or if they have any armor in there? They would be going in blind."

"They would also be blind," replied Forge, saying something before anyone else could. "Unless the Covenant has heat seeking tech like we do, we should be able to do fine. The question is how are we going to destroy that base?"

"MAC round?"

"No!" cried the professor.

"Jeez Anders! No need to shout!"

"Sorry but if you fire a MAC, it will not only cause the destruction of the Covenant base but would possibly damage our FOB. This mountain range is rather close of our FOB and with the amount of kinetic energy along with explosive power one round does, it would cause an avalanche that would cover the whole base."

"What about the Primus?" asked Cole as he looked at Summerton.

"Any ship that has the Primus is either lacks the power to fire it without removing it from a vital system or possess no more rounds for it."

"Explosives?"

"They would have to be placed within the base and blown up from the inside out."

"Archers and Overlords are out?"

"We would need more than one missile to take it out and that has the possibility of causing the same effect as the MAC round," stated Anders as she flipped her hair out of her eyes.

"So the only option is a HALO drop?" questioned Cutters.

"Seems like it. Can you get a company on the horn?" asked Cole.

"Alacrity Company will do it sir," said James as he stepped from his position before anyone could say anything.

"How long will it take to get your company ready, soldier?"

"As soon as I can get back to the _Spirit_, it'll take a matter of minutes before drop sir."

"Why don't you head to the Pelican now James? Get back to the ship and prepare for drop," said Cutter. "We'll coordinate here on the _Everest_."

"Roger sir."

With that, the six ODST soldiers vacated from the room as they headed to the Pelican. The room was silent as the remaining figures looked either at each other or at the map on the table. Finally, it was Cole who broke the silence as he turned to look at the old captain.

"Do you wish to join me on the bridge, Captain, professor, Sergeant?" he asked. "We can talk about our future plans with Harvest."

"Very well," answered Captain Cutter as Professor Anders replied with a brief nod of her head.

"Might as well see what we're going to be dealing with," mumbled Forge as he followed the exiting group, but stopped to look at the remaining pair. "It's nice to see again kid. I'll talk to you later after you talk with your lady friend."

Forge left but gave a wink to the male before doing so. Silence reigned within the room as the pair looked at opposite sides of the room. With a silent gulp, Lyons looked at the female commander as he tried to suppress his nerves.

"Lizzie..." he started, earning him her attention. "Thank you..."

"Thank you for what?" she genuinely asked with confusion etched on her face.

"Everything. You saved me earlier and you've done so much for me..."

"It's nothing Ly. You would have done the same thing for me," she said with a smile that sent flutters into his stomach.

"Do you, if you have time later, want to go grab some food?" he asked, cheeks starting to glow red in nervousness and embarrassment. "I mean if you're not busy and all, and if you want to go grab some food with me. You don't have to go if you don't want -"

"Ly, you're rambling again," she said before placing her finger on his lips to prevent him from speaking. "And I would like that. I'll see you later then?"

"Yeah... Later," he said with a small smile gracing his face as he looked into her grey eyes one more time before she left the room, leaving him alone in it.

Bifrost Mountain Range

Before the war had erupted, the Bifrost mountain ranges were some of the most dangerous to climb and it was well known all throughout Harvest. Without the right equipment, it was common for people to fall and severely hurt themselves. A few have outright died from the impact at the base of the mountain. Needless to say, it's completely dangerous.

"Damn this snow," muttered Chief Waterfield as he drove his foot into the deep snow.

"Stop complaining," said Colonel Halls as she slapped him on the side of his head. "We've lost contact with _Everest_ and I'm not one to believe that they are destroyed until it's stated otherwise."

"With all due respect ma'am, comms have been silent for several hours now," stated another soldier. "FOB hasn't been able to pick them up."

"Deso Company, this is Deso Actual," spoke the radio.

"Soldier, keep your mouth shut," ordered the female CO before motioning for the company to halt. "Deso Actual, this is Deso-1. What can we do for you?"

"Deso-1, _Everest _has reported in. Here is your current objective. You are to head to a valley 3 klicks northwest of your current location and hold there. How do you copy?"

"Good copy, Actual. We'll head that way right now," reported Halls as she ended the channel before turning to her men. "We just got an update. We're heading to a valley 3 klicks northwest and holding there until further orders."

"Why would we wait there?" muttered an ODS, more to himself but it was loud enough for Claire to hear.

"Orders are from _Everest_, ladies and gents. Now let's move!"

The company of ODS continued their trudge through the covered mountains, enduring the high winds and the infinite amounts of snow that blew their way. It took a couple of hours before the large group found themselves looking at the large snow covered plains that seem to stretch farther than their eyes could see.

"There it is," mumbled Chief Waterfield before spotting something out of the corner of his eyes. "Shit! Get down!"

Everyone heard the order and dropped down into the thick snow with their weapons at the ready. Eyes were alert looking for anything that could have been a sign of a threat.

"What is it?" asked the female Colonel as she aimed her rifle into the unknown.

"This point is compromised," he replied back as he slowly shifted himself up so he could get another look. "We found a Covenant base. From the looks of it, it's more of a station for a bigger one. There's not that many here and no sign of armor."

"I'll relay it to Actual," she said before slowly moving back and then activating her radio. "Actual, this is Deso-1. Point is compromised, I repeat it is compromised."

"Say again, Deso-1," chirped the radio.

"Point is compromised, Actual. We found a small base at the valley, but there seems to be no armor and little hostiles. What are your orders?"

"Hold Deso-1, we'll patch you to _Everest_."

"Colonel Hall, this is Vice Admiral Cole," started the radio. "We need you to clear that valley up. That point is going to be an LZ for your reinforcements. Drop is in ten mikes."

"Yes sir! We'll get right on it," she replied before turning to her men. "Looks like we're going to see some action earlier than we expected. We need to take out that base. Apparently, this valley is going to be an LZ for our troops."

"Huh... Fun times then?" replied Waterfield. "How do you want to do this?"

"Have our sniper teams set up shop here. The rest of us will climb down there and take them down quick and quietly. We have ten mikes to clear them out."

"Roger that," replied the rest of the company. Four small groups consisting of four members headed for the ledge while the rest headed down the white covered slope with their rifles at the ready.

"Colonel, this is Sniper Lead," chirped her radio. "All sniper teams are set with Infrared and IFF settings We have spotted a small patrol group half a klick from your current position."

"Take them out quickly and quietly," ordered the colonel before motioning her unit to halt in their advance. The group heard a series of soft thuds before she motioned for the continued advancement from her group. They quickly found the dead carcasses of the patrol unit with their purple and blue blood soaking into the snow.

"Bury them deep into the snow," she quietly ordered to the closest group of soldiers. "Let's hope that they're a new group and won't have to report in soon."

"Deso-1, Sniper Lead," chirped her radio once more. "A pair of Covies just exited the base. It might be a northern entrance They seem to be staying rather close to it. The western entrance is clear."

"Copy that Sniper Lead. We're heading there right now," replied Halls before turning to examine the inconspicuous work that her men had just finished. "Good. We have a pair of sentries posted outside the entrance. Let's move!"

The group started to move quickly through the snow, careful of making little to no noise and they were greatly surprised to find the size of the base. It was tall enough to stand out from the constant snowstorm and its purple color allowed it to be seen from afar. However, they weren't expecting it to be a rather large base.

"I don't think this is just a station," muttered Chief Waterfield before looking at something from the corner of his eye. "Looks like they have some heavy weaponry but no signs of armor."

"Alpha and Beta are to head for the northern entrance. Charlie, Delta, and Echo are to circle around the back and clear any patrols and straying units," she ordered as she pointed at the respective squad leaders. "Foxtrot and Omega are with me. We're going in through the western entrance. Move it people!"

The large group of white clad units all dispersed into smaller units, heading towards their objectives. Nothing was heard and nothing was seen as they moved along the purple sides of the base. Up on the ridge, the sniper teams watch in anticipation at the possible engagement that was about to break out.

"This is Omega, ready to breach western entrance."

"Foxtrot, ready to breach."

"Alpha, we're near the northern entrance. We have no visual on the sentries."

"Beta, sentries have been spotted. Permission to take them out?"

"This is Deso-1, Beta, you are cleared for weapons free. Foxtrot and Omega are cleared to breach on my mark," ordered Halls. "Alpha, get set to breach as soon as you can. Chances are that we'll need you in here. Sniper team, take down any Covenant that Charlie, Delta, and Echo don't spot."

"This is Foxtrot-Lead, breaching on Deso-1."

"Breach!"

Explosives had been placed on the metal door that prevented entrance but it wasn't able to withstand the strength of the blast as it flew backwards, releasing some black smoke. The two squads quickly entered through the hole and were met with a hail of bolts. Some of them met their marks and struck the entering ODST.

"Find some cover and light these bastards up," roared one of the officers. "Get the injured to cover!"

The ODST rushed to find any source of cover, ducking through the flying bolts. As soon as they found some, they started to unleash their own bullets on the defenders. Explosions soon started to fill the base as grenades became frequently used.

"Alpha, where the hell are you?!" asked Chief Waterfield as he shot another Covenant unit with his BR55HB SR Battle Rifle. As soon as he said it, the sound of an explosion going off filled the room, exposing a hole into the battlefield. Debris flew in all directions in the form of metal shards and from the hole, several white clad figures entered with their weapons launching projectiles at their targets.

"About damn time, soldier!" shouted Waterfield through the radio as his rifle spat out another three rounds into a nearby Covenant target. "Reloading!"

"Flash bang out!"

A loud explosion filled the room once more and this time, the ODST soldiers within the room popped up from their cover and started to unleash a hail of bullets into the disorientated aliens. It didn't take too long for them to fall, even the ones with the personal shielding.

"All teams, this is Deso-1. Ground floor is clear."

"Deso-1, this is Sniper Lead. It's clear outside."

"Hey Colonel, look at this," called a soldier who was kneeling beside one of the fallen aliens. "These are the guys that had personal shielding. Weird looking thing."

"They have split lips, or jaw..." stated another rather dumbly.
"Looks taller than any of us."

"Take pictures of it, send it to Actual," ordered Halls. "At least we'll have a way to recognize these... aliens."

"Contact!" shouted one of the ODS'T on the outside perimeter as he snapped his rifle up to unload the whole clip into a charging figure. He didn't last long as a neon green blast struck him and exploding into a cloud of green. From the cloud, two creatures of similar characteristics appeared. They held a large metal shield-like structure on one of their arms while the other was basically a cannon with green tubes connected to it. They wore blue armor with large spines on the back and exposed some of orange substance between the gaps.

"What the hell is that thing?!" questioned another as he unloaded his clip before jumping behind cover.

"Whatever it is, it needs to go down! Frag out!" called Halls as she lobbed a dark green item and it landed right between the feet of one of them. The explosion rocked the structure and the remaining ODS'T peeked out of their covers to see if their target was dead. However, their security was short lived as a pair of green blasts shot at two different areas, causing independent explosions .

"Those things have tough armor!" stated Waterfield as he ejected his empty clip before reloading a full one in. "I'm pretty sure that we wasted at least a dozen clips on them!"

"Toss some more frags!"

Several of the unit did just that, pulling the pin out and lobbing it at the pair of assaulting creatures. They landed everywhere around it and once one of the grenades exploded, the rest followed after. It didn't surprise them that the structure shook from the size of the explosion. Large started to appear on the purple walls and the floor above them was showing signs of wearing down from the constant weakening on its supports.

"If we're not careful, we're going to drop this whole base on top of us!" warned Claire as more of her company lobbed at least half a dozen more grenades. The constant explosion produced a large cloud of white smoke and that was when they stopped throwing the hand sized explosives.

"They dead?" asked a random soldier as they all looked above their cover. He was answered quickly as the pair ran out from the cloud in a rush, their shield impacting on one of the metal covers that several members were using and crushing them against the purple wall. Shouts filled the air as everyone started to run away from the charging beings, knowing that anyone who got hit would be dead instantly. However, Claire was able to notice something.

"This is Deso-1 to all squads. Toss all your grenades and bring this whole base down. Then get the hell out of here!"

Everyone complied as they ejected the pins on their grenades before tossing them into the weakening room. It was chaos as all of Deso Company ran for the exit to get out of the base before the explosion

and they were able to succeed as the explosion began. However, they failed to realize that the floor above the room was filled with fuel cells and it caused a massive chain reaction that launched those within the blast radius a few meters away. All that remained of the building was the burning foundation and the small pieces that fell from the sky.

Claire Halls, one of the best ODS'T's known in the UNSC and she was damn proud of that. However, she knew that something was wrong the minute she had entered that base. It had begun with that skirmish and she knew that it was too easy. She was right when these two blue armored creatures appeared out of nowhere and started kill some of her men with their large cannons or by ramming them into the wall. All she remembered was giving the order to get out before tossing all of her grenades into the room with the two aliens. Everyone was exiting and she knew she had gotten out from that metal building before she felt no control over the movement of her body and let the gentle blackness consume her consciousness.

"-get up."

She knew something was wrong as the blackness started to fade and she felt her eyes trying to clear up her vision. In front of her was someone she knew all too well, Chief Waterfield. His helmet wasn't tinted, allowing her to see his eyes but she could feel soreness course through her body.

"C'mon Halls! Get up!" said the man in front of her as he continued to shake her.

"Damn it Waterfield, stop shaking me!" she replied back as he pushed him away from her. Using every ounce of strength she had left, she pulled her body up to look at her surroundings.

"What happened?"

"From what we found out, that base had something that reacted with the explosions from the grenades," stated another person whom she couldn't recognize of the top of her head. "It could have been anything from fuel to their explosives."

"And who the hell are you?" she asked bluntly, not caring about protocol or such.

"Warrant Officer Hayfield of Alacrity Company," replied the man as he saluted to her. "Chief Waterfield reported to Everest that the base was down but that there were casualties so they dropped us in."

"How many did we lose?" she questioned and she had a feeling she wasn't going to like the answer.

"Overall, we lost about 49 soldiers from all events. Another 78 were injured ranging from moderate to severe," answered Waterfield as he looked her in the eyes. "We'll need to rest up before we pull out and chances are, the Covenant will know that this base is gone."

"What is command saying?"

"We wait," answered Hayfield. "Almost a third to a half of your entire company was lost. Spirit Of Fire will be dropping in some

more reinforcements and some armor as soon as you're 100%."

She knew that she couldn't win against this one. Orders came directly from the person in charge of the campaign and she knew that with those losses, her company wasn't going to be operating well for a while.

"Fine. But where the hell are we anyway?" she asked.

"Harvest Reactor Complex."

"What?"

****Military Dictionary:****

****Bird: Flying vehicle, refering to a plane or helicopter****

****Klick: Kilometer ex. five klicks = five kilometers****

****Mike: Minute ex. five mikes = five minutes****

****FOB: Forward Operating Base****

****ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival****

****A/N: Thanks for reading! Read and review! No flames. Seriously. And see you all next time.****

End
file.